

Memoria

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>Summary: Post-HTTYD2. Astrid and Hiccup wed.

I originally posted this fic on June 15 on AO3, but it's sure taken a while to mirror it over here, eh? Please note that this fic does contain major spoilers for _How to Train Your Dragon 2_. If you haven't seen the sequel yet, please don't read this fic! For real! Don't do it, friend! All right, that's my warning for ya.

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><p>Memoria

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><p>After the seven day feast, the newly named chief was wedded to Astrid and Astrid to Hiccup, chief of Berk. Gothi, eldest, stood for the gods, and before the gods, they knelt. His shoulder brushed Astrid's, and their arms settled. Their cloaks pooled together. She'd fur sewn into the lining, to trim the edges. Hiccup's cloak was just cloth, a pale yellow cloth to provide a counterpoint to the darker green of her dress. He glanced and found her watching him, from the corner of her eye. She wrinkled her nose and that was as much a smile as she'd give him, here. The tightness in his chest loosened.<p>

Gothi marked their faces with clay and then, bidding they give her

each their hands, their palms, so that the lines she'd drawn were mirrored. She gestured to the carved boxes, one set before each. They exchanged bracelets: an iron ring for Hiccup's wrist; a silver one for Astrid's wrist. Gothi clapped her hands, and Astrid and Hiccup, raising, clasped hands, clay lines aligned with clay lines. Then it was done.

Tradition decreed that they were to proceed to the bridal chamber direct from there, so Valka was brief. She touched Hiccup's cheekbone with the tips of her fingers, the right cheek with the left hand. Some days before, on the groom's night, Valka had givenâ€”stilted, somewhat, before so many peopleâ€”the ritual speech ascribed to the groom's father. Now she said only, "How much you've grown," softly, with her eyes dark and fixed on his chin.

He would have covered her hand with his own. She withdrew her fingers before he might. At last she met his gaze.

"Your father and I," said his mother. "We areâ€”so very proud of you."

Then Gothi clicked her fingers, and Astrid left her mother, as Hiccup left his; and together they walked to the final, private ceremony. When the door closed, Astrid sighed explosively and fell back on the bed. Her cloak nearly swallowed her.

"I'm so glad that's over," she said to the ceiling. "That took forever! I thought we'd be out there when the gods go to war, still eating."

Hiccup laughed. "Whatâ€”and disgrace your family with a mere four days of feasting?"

She sat upright and began the work of unlacing her boots.

"I'd have been fine with one."

"Personally, I enjoyed all the stories," Hiccup said, content to watch her slowly work through the layers. "Drinkingâ€”Reminiscingâ€”The fightingâ€”People throwing punches left and rightâ€”Really getting into the wedding spirit."

"And the spirits," Astrid said, kicking her boots away, "until somebody set them fire."

"Toothless didn't mean to," he protested. "That was an accident, an honest mistake. They should've known better than to leave that stuff out in the open."

Astrid wrinkled her nose at him again. "And then there's this!" She lifted her arm. The bracelet slipped to her elbow, over the thin sleeve of her dress.

"What's wrong with it?" He crossed over to the bed and took her hand. "I like it. I thought I did a pretty good job, all things considered."

She shook her arm and the bracelet shivered up then down once more.

"They're supposed to match."

"Well, if we're going to start comparing," Hiccup said, and he held his own arm up. "What'sâ€"what's this? When were you planning to consult me on this?"

"Iron's traditional!" Astrid said. She frowned. "And don't try to push this off on me when you're the show-off."

"How is that showing off, making my wife a wedding bracelet she can be proud of and pass down for generations as an heirloomâ€"?"

He was rambling. He knew, because Astrid did what she always did when he rambled, which was pitch her voice through her nose.

"And I don't mean to brag, but frankly, it's the finest bracelet ever made by Viking hands'â€"?"

"Not the finest," he said. "And I can always take it backâ€"?"

"I never said I didn't like it." Astrid caught his arm, so that they were stuck, holding each other. The drying clay left rusty streaks on his white sleeve. She ducked her face so she could squint up at him. "Do you really want to have to go back out there and explain to Odin and all the rest of the godsâ€"and Gothiâ€"and your motherâ€"and _my_motherâ€"that we made a mistake?"

"Eh," Hiccup said, shrugging. He rubbed his thumb along her wrist. "We can probably live with the consequences of this mistake, horrible though they may be."

Astrid laughed then, her whole face creasing. "Horrible," she agreed. "Awful. The worst imaginable. _Can_ you imagine? Living together? What were we thinking!"

Hiccup smiled down at their hands, arms, the clay rubbing off on their clothes and staining the fine cloth. He turned his hands over so that he could take up her palms in his hands, the smudged lines Gothi had drawn no longer neatly fitting. Their fingers fitted well enough together. The iron bracelet on his arm was heavy, a new weight to carry. The heft of it, wedged around his forearm where it could slide down no further, was pleasant.

He peered up at her from under his bangs. "I love you," he said.

Astrid's smile changed, from a laughing thing to something smaller. Her lips turned in, as she bit at them. Her face was shining. She was always shining. Hiccup wondered if his father had felt like this, when Stoick married. This room, in the back of the great hall, had been used for weddings for generations going back to not long after the first sea-voyagers had come to Berk.

"I love you, too," Astrid said. Her fingers wound through his. Her hands were sturdy, her nails carefully trimmed; their palms were of a close size, Hiccup's only just longer, but Astrid's wider.

The silver bracelet had slid down to her wrist again. He'd crafted it himself, as Astrid had made the iron ring he wore around his own arm. He'd shaped the metal; he'd cut into it the curling pattern, the old

oath to the gods as Gothi had written it, in the decorative script few in the village cared to learn or to remember.

"I may have been showing off a little," he admitted.

"Oh, a little? Just a little?" Astrid dropped his hand, to thump him lightly on the chest with her knuckles. The bracelet swung with her arm. She was grinning now, her lip pulled back so her top teeth showed.

"Not a _lot_â€"I couldn't figure out how to draw Stormfly small enough to fit her on the ringâ€" "

Astrid pushed him down onto the bed, and Hiccup went, laughing. He lifted a hand, meaning to brush her face with his fingers, but Astrid caught him: she hooked a finger in the iron bracelet and stopped his arm. The bracelet she'd made was characteristically Astrid in make: strong; plain. With little practiceâ€"no practiceâ€"in a forge, she'd chosen to hammer the ring rather than set a mold, and so the metal lookedâ€"like dragon skin, he thought, or almost. There was beauty in that, too.

"I like it," he said.

Astrid rolled her eyes and shook her hair back: the brush-off.

"Sorry," Hiccup teased, "I forgot, you don't acknowledge feelings of weakness."

"I don't have feelings of weakness," she said, pursing her lips. He had thought they might drag the joke out longer, but Astrid, looking at him with her hair gleaming all around her, bent to kiss him.

"I'm glad you like it," she said to his lips. "I'm sorry it isn't as nice as mine."

"It's nice," he said, looking at the bracelet, still hooked on her fingers. "You made it for me. Right? So it's good. It's great. We'll pass it on to our great great great greatâ€" "

"How long do you think we're going to live?" Astrid asked.

"â€"great grandkids, so that they'll always remember, Grandma Astrid could do anything she wanted, and she did, no matter what Gobber used to say."

"Are you making fun of me now?"

"What, it can't go both ways?" he said. "You can make fun of me, but I can't make fun of you?"

"Who said that?" Astrid made a show of looking over her shoulders, peering into the corners of the room. "I don't remember saying that."

"It was implied," said Hiccup, "by your tone of voice, gesturing, that look on your faceâ€" "

"What look? The look I'm giving you right now?"

"No, no, that look," Hiccup said, pointing with the hand she had trapped, "that's the one that says 'oh, Hiccup, I love you so much'â€"

"My voice isn't that high," she said, laughing.

"'You're so brave and smart and handsome'â€"

"'I sure do think I'm the best,'" Astrid said, nasally, "'even though Astrid's kicked my butt at Dragon Games eight weeks in a row'â€"

"I gave you that last victory," Hiccup said, breaking out of character. "Do you not remember that? Because I remember, very clearly, that Toothless and I caught the black sheepâ€"

"'I just hope our kids take after her'â€"

"Are you finished?"

"I'm thinking," Astrid said. "Yeah. I'm finished."

She bent again. Her hands lowered, and his arm went with. The warmth of her hands on his chest was nothing new, no newer than anything else they were expected to do this evening; not new, but still sweet. He thought it might always be like that, always sweet, always wanted. He hoped so. He remembered the cave, and his father singing with his mother, and how strange it had been, and how wonderful, to see his parents dancing with each other, and happy with each other, and in love, still, even then.

The fingers wound through the bracelet unwound. She reached to cradle his cheek. He turned, leaning into the shape of her palm, cupping. The fragrance of the clay, dried and crumbling, filled him. Her thumb stroked along his eyebrow, and he closed his eyes. Astrid kissed his cheek, the side of his nose and then the tip of it, and lastly his lips, each kiss light; every kiss sweet. The iron bracelet was heavy, but when he raised his arms to embrace her, he found he hardly noticed the weight, so familiar it had become already. Astrid embraced him in turn. Everything after thatâ€"he never forgot. He never could, any more than he could forget so many other things. Toothless, resting his head on top of Hiccup's head, so that Hiccup struggled to stand. Stoick, clasping Hiccup on the shoulder and smiling down at him. His mother, masked in the darkness, reaching for the scar on Hiccup's chin. Orâ€"very long agoâ€"when they were still childrenâ€"eight years old, or nine, well before loveâ€"when Astrid punched Snotlout in the nose for picking on smaller kids, and then she had helped Hiccup stand up.

"Thank you," Hiccup had stammered out.

Astrid had frowned at him. "For what?" she'd said.

He'd opened his mouth, meaning to say for protecting me from my stupid cousinâ€"but he only said, "Never mind," meekly, and wiped at his own still bleeding nose.

Her frown had deepened.

"If you don't stop insulting him, he's going to keep beating you,"

she said, and thenâ€”before Hiccup could try to explain anythingâ€”she'd walked away, as if none of it had mattered, or if she'd already forgot.

It had mattered then. It always did.

"What are you thinking?"

Astrid rose from his shoulders, kissing the underside of his jaw on her way up.

Hiccup blinked at her. _Her_ shoulders were half-bared, the right shoulder out, the other still covered.

"How many people do you think haveâ€”you knowâ€”married in here?" he blurted out. "In this bed."

Astrid made a face. "I've been trying not to think about that."

"Maybe we should wait," he suggested. Once he'd thought it, he couldn't not think it. "It's not like this is really necessary, like we haven't done it before."

"Well," Astrid said, resting her chin on his chest. "What do you want to do instead? Do you want to go back out and get something to eat?"

He scowled, and she grinned in return.

So he said, "Do you remember that time you punched Snotlout?"

"I remember many times," Astrid said.

"For me," he corrected.

More dryly, Astrid said, "Yes. I remember many times."

Hiccup rolled his eyes up, at the ceiling. "The first time."

"Of course I remember," Astrid said. "You said, it's no wonder Snotlout's muscles are so big, since his brain is so small."

"I didn't say that," Hiccup argued, but he was smiling at her.

Astrid shook her head. "You did. I remember. Do you think I'd forget something like that?" she said, meaning the insult.

"No," Hiccup said, meaning something else. He brushed the hair back from her eyes, and Astrid wrinkled her nose again.

"Did you forget?" she said, poking at him.

"No," he said again, touching, gently, the wide curve of her cheek.

He thought of Stoick, walking up the rocks to Valka, unforgotten; he thought of his mother, reaching for him. He thought of Toothless, recognizing Hiccup at last; and he thought again of Astrid, when they

were young, her hair in two braids, giving him her hand to help him back on to his feet.

"I didn't forget," Hiccup said.

Love was like that.

End
file.